1990

Winter

NCNA *Journal*

N.C. N.A.

JOURNAL

WINTER
1990

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I thoroughly enjoyed serving as your president this past year and I sincerely thank all of you for your support. Reflecting back on 1989, it was a good year for numismatics in general and high quality coins in particular. I solicit your support in gaining new members for our association, especially young numismatists, for they are our future leaders. My new year resolution is to visit each of your local clubs. I hope to see you soon.

D. Clark White
President

N C N A NEWS

COIN CLUB DIRECTORY REQUEST COMING

The main feature of the spring issue of the N C N A JOURNAL will be the Coin Club Directory. The questionnaires requesting officer's names, meeting places and date and any shows planned will be in the mail shortly. Don't let your club secretary forget to fill this out and return it.

ADVERTISING RATES

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DUES REMINDER

If you have not yet paid your 1990 dues, please send them as soon as possible to N C N A, Box 20653, Greensboro, North Carolina 27420-0-653.

BIRDS ON COINS
Part I

by Halbert Carmichael

Topical collecting, collecting coins for what is shown in their designs is one way to build a specialized coin collection. One of the topics that offers the widest variety of material is ornithology, or the study of birds.

There are about a thousand coin types from around the world and through history that depict birds as part of their design. Half of these are eagles, many shown in heraldic poses and not life-like representations. Almost half of the remainder are doves, usually standing for peace.

The earliest coinages from early Greece showed natural animate types: turtles, bulls etc. The most famous of the Greek coins the tetradrachm of Athens depicted the symbol of Athena, the owl. First struck about 500 BC, the design was continued for over a hundred years. While the details of the type vary, it shows a charming and accurate portrait of an owl, presumably *Athena noctua,* the little owl. While good specimens of this ancient coin will cost in the hundreds of dollars, a modern representation can be obtained quite cheaply in the Greek, 2 drachma of 1973, Y-108, which shows what now appears to be a stylized version of the bird. An occasional eagle, swan or other bird appeared on other Greek and Roman coins.

Greek tetradrachm
circa 450 BC
Little owl

Continued

The coinages of the middle ages were dominated by religious themes and showed few natural objects. Heraldry did use objects such as lions, horses, and birds. Therefore when during the Renaissance coats of arms began to appear on coinage, birds, especially eagles also appeared. However they were not treated in a very natural way: two heads, skinny bodies, spread eagled, outsized talons holding all sorts of strange objects.

Birds began their comeback in some ways with the early coinage of the United States. All our silver coins showed eagles. Poorly executed, but recognizable eagles. One was so poorly sculpted that it is often referred to as a "starving pigeon." Christian Gobrecht made the most realistic eagle on the pattern coinage he designed in the 1830's. Supposedly his model was Peter, a tame bird of unknown species, that made his home in the Philadelphia mint. After being used on a number of pattern coins, Gobrecht's eagle was used on the flying eagle cent, a coin too small to do the design justice. Subsequent

Guatemala
quarter quetzal, 1946
quetzal

eagles on US coinage have varied from purely heraldic on the Morgan dollar to looking like a buzzard on the standing liberty quarter and on the St. Gaudens $20. My favorite eagle on US coinage is on the the walking liberty half dollar. One of the few references that routinely identifies the objects shown on coins, Gunter Schon's Catalogue of 20th Century Coins, routinely refers to all eagles on silver coins as bald eagles and all eagles on gold coins as golden eagles. This is about as good a distinction as is possible because without color there is very little to separate the two species.

As with the United States, Mexico and Chile adopted birds as their national symbols and routinely put them on their coins, as early as 1822 in both cases. Aztec legend refers to a bird perched on a cactus and eating a serpent as the sign for the place to found their capital city. This symbol has appeared on almost all Mexican coins since independence. The identity of the bird is uncertain. it may be either a golden eagle or a caracara. Chile adopted the Andean condor as its symbol, and condors rendered with more or less skill have appeared on many, but not all Chilean coins. Our cover photo is one of the better views of the Chilean condor.

The nineteenth century saw two more birds appear in coin designs In 1851 Burma struck a series of coins whose reverse was dominated by a peacock. Although recognizable, the rendering shows some artistic licence: the feathers of the tail fan out from a point behind the head not from the base of the tail. The second 19th century bird design is one of the most spectacular ever. The series of five denominations struck for the German New Guinea Company in 1894 all had a reverse that contained only a greater bird of paradise. On the larger coins this is a truly stunning design. Unlike many modern coins these did circulate; my well-worn specimen was obtained in New Guinea during World War II by an American GI.

German New
Guinea Company
5 mark, 1894
Greater bird of Paradise

The national bird of Guatemala is the quetzal. In fact the country's unit of money is named the quetzal. This splendid long-tailed, bright green bird of the rain forest is shown on most coins as a minor part of the coat of arms. It is best displayed on the quarter quetzals of 1926-1949 (KM 243.1&2) shown on the previous page.

Continued

Twentieth century bird coins really got their start in 1928 with the coinage of newly independent Ireland. The farthing showed a European woodcock diving in its nuptial flight and the penny showed a hen and chicks. These designs by Percy Metcalf were so skilful in fitting their subjects to the round flan, that they have been an inspiration for all subsequent animal coin designs. New Zealand began its own coinage in 1933 using their national bird, the kiwi, on the florin. The kiwi is a strange shape for a bird, but it fits the round coin perfectly. Subsequently New Zealand added a six pence with a huia, a long billed bird that has been extinct since the turn of the century and a penny with the tui, or parson bird.

New Zealand
penny, 1940
tui

Two more Commonwealth countries used birds in very different ways. South Africa has used two "sparrows", really weaver finches on their smallest denomination. This was originally a farthing, and the birds alluded to the biblical quotation that God cared even for the sparrows that were sold two for a farthing in the market. I wonder what Palestinian bird Jesus was referring to. When South Africa decimalized its coinage in 1960? the stylized farthing was replaced by a much more natural pair of birds on the new cent, which was worth two of the old farthings. Australia used an emu as a supporter on its coat of arms which was used as the reverse on the florin. The bird is a small part of the design so it is not a very satisfactory picture.

In 1937 Great Britain brought out new reverse designs for its minor coinage which included a charming wren on the smallest coin, the farthing. Ironically, the bird shown, *Troglodytes troglodytes*, is the only European representative of what is really a new world family.

Japan has used several birds on its smaller coins. The one on a two yen coin of 1948 (Y71) and the 5 sen of 1945 (Y65)is clearly a pigeon, or rock dove. Another on the 1 sen of 1937 (Y56) looks a lot like a crow with its large bill.

To be continued

AN IRONIC TWIST IN THE WORLD'S COINAGE

From the time of the earliest Greek coinages through Roman and medieval times most of the world's coinage was essentially binary. A basic unit of value was defined and struck along with its double and often its quadruple. Think of the Greek tetradrachm, four drachmas. Then there was the English groat or four pennies. The famous "piece of eight" was eight reales two times the four reales. The one, two, four and eight reales were all struck as coins.. If fractions were made they were usually halves and quarters: halfpennys and farthings in the English system.

While there was more variation in the values of coins struck in different metals, they too were often powers of two. The one real exception to this trend was the British who in their own inimitable style used multiples of twelve pence to the shilling (a mathematically convenient division) and twenty shillings to the pound (not so convenient for making fractions).

The first attempt at a decimal coinage was by Peter the Great of Russia, but the oldest continuous decimal coinage is that of the United States. In Napoleonic times France converted to a franc of 100 centimes, and slowly all the countries of the world converted over to decimal systems. This conversion made sense because our number system is based on the number ten, and it is so much easier to represent hundredths than eighths or sixteenths of a unit.

By 1971 the last country in the world, Great Britain, had converted to a decimal type coinage: a pound of 100 new pence. This was just in time for the world's mints to get themselves back out of phase with the bookkeepers who are now using computers. Computers do all their arithmetic on base two. All numbers are represented as sums of powers of two. This leads to some interesting problems. Some accounting programs have trouble handling long strings of additions or subtractions of factions of dollars because they are representing each entry as a best approximation. The errors can accumulate to give a few cents error after a while.

COIN SHOW CALENDAR

LOCAL CHAIRMEN PLEASE NOTIFY THE EDITOR, Box 5625, Raleigh, NC 27650 of your plans as soon as possible to avoid conflicts. Information transmitted in writing is safer, but between issues inquiries and information can be recieved during evening hours at 919-832-4128. or during business hours at 919-828-9450.

JANUARY1990

4-7 F. U. N. Convention, Convention Center, Tampa FL, Ginger Bryan, Drawer D, Gainesville FL

14 Greater Atlanta Coin Dealers, Holiday Inn, Powers Ferry Rd Atlanta GA, Bob O'Brien, Box 4942, Highpoint Dr., Marietta GA 30066

20-21 Carolina Coin & Stamp Conventions, Mission Valley Inn, Raleigh, Ted Hendrick, Box 12052, Raleigh NC 27650

26-28 Middle Georgia Coin Club, Coliseum, Macon GA, Danny R. Robinson, Box 913, Macon GA 31202

FEBRUARY 1990

2-4 Fort Loudon & Smokey Mt Coin Clubs, Rodeway Inn, Knoxville TN, Kenneth Kingsbury, Rt 7, Box 446, Lenoir City TN 37771

9-11 Peach State Coin Show, Waverly Hotel, Atlanta GA, Mike Griffith, Box 76482, Atlanta GA 30358

9-11 Florida Paper Money Show, Howard Johnsons-Skyway Inn, St. Petersburd FL, Quality Coin Shows, 6196-1 Macon, Suite 191 Memphis TN 38134

16-18 Charlotte Coin Club, Merchandise Mart, Charlotte NC Will Jordan, Box 33292, Charlotte NC 28233

16-18 Suburban Washington Coin Club, Festival Hall, Convention Center, Baltimore MD, Gordon Berg, Box 1876, Rockville MD 20850

23-25 Greenville Coin Club, Holiday Inn Roper Mtn Rd, Greenville SC, Don McAllister, 2207 W. Parker Rd., Greenville SC 29611

23-25 NE Alabama Coin Club, Gadsden Mall, Gadsden AL, Gene Mitchel, Box 1862, Gadsden AL 35902

MARCH 1990

2-4 American Numismatic Association Midwinter Convention, San Diego CF

3-4 Cumberland County Coin Club, Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel, Fayetteville NC, Charles Kimber, 3705 Florida Dr., Fayetteville NC 27664

16-18 Model City Coin Club, Civic Auditorium, Kingsport TN, E. S. Stanley, 3737 Hemlock Park Rd, Kingsport TN, 37662
17-18 Eagle Coin Club, National Guard Armory Lexington NC, Bob Woodruff, Box 424, Lexington NC 27292
23-25 Tennessee State Numismatic Society, Quality Inn, East Ridge, Chattanooga TN, Ruth Armstrong, Box 80052, Chattanooga TN 37411
31-Apr 1 Tidewater Coin Club, Virginia Beach Pavillion, Virginia Beach VA, Malcolm Gutterman, Box 1145, Norfolk VA, 23501

APRIL 1990
6-8 Lower Cape Fear Coin Club, Elk's Lodge, Oleander Dr., Wilmington NC, David Porter, Box 4332, Wilmington NC 28406

MAY 1990
5-6 Winston-Salem Coin Club, Sprague Recaration Center, Winston-Salem NC, Lonnie Stewart, 1940 Dacian St., Winston-Salem NC 27107
19-20 Raleigh Coin Club, Quality Inn, Mission Valley, Raleigh NC, Halbert Carmichael, Box 5625, Raleigh, NC 27650
25-27 Georgia Numismatic Association Convention, Waverly Hotel, Atlanta GA, John Hancock, 311 Green St., Gainesville GA 30501

JUNE 1990
8-10 Carolina Coin & Stamp Conventions, Charlotte NC, Ted Hendrick
15-17 International Paper Money Show, Cook Conv Center, Memphis TN, Mike Crabb, Box 17871, Memphis TN 38187

AUGUST 1990
22-26 American Numismatic Association Convention, Seattle WA
31-2 Sep Peach State Coin Show, Waverly Hotel, Atlanta GA, Mike Griffith, Box 76482, Atlanta GA 30358

SEPTEMBER 1990
14-16 Carolina Coin & Stamp Conventions, Charlotte NC, Ted Hendrick

NOVEMBER 1990
3-4 Carolina Coin & Stamp Conventions, Quality Inn, Mission Valley, Raleigh NC, Ted Hendrick

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Use the attached membership application to do your part to help the North Carolina Numismatic Association by signing up a new member today. At A Board of Directors meeting, the Board created a new membership classification: Joint Membership. This allows two members of the same household, either husband and wife or parent and child, to both be full members of NCNA at a reduced rate. Both would have full voting privileges; but only one copy of the NCNA JOURNAL will be mailed to the Joint Members.

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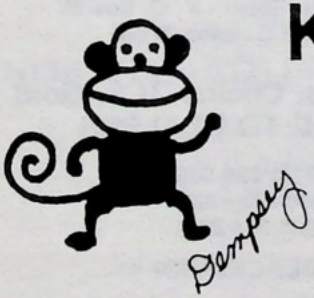

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